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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000417

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UN U/SYG VENESS AND DCM DISCUSS IZ TRANSITION PLAN

REF: NEW YORK 00104

Classified By: DCM David Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Visiting UN U/SYG for Safety and Security David Veness called on the DCM on February 10 to discuss plans for the transition of the International Zone (IZ); short- and longer-term UN security and logistical arrangements; the development of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF); and the current threat situation in Iraq. The DCM assured the U/SYG that we have confidence in the security status of the UN's current quarters in the al-Rasheed Hotel as it transfers to Iraqi management in May 2006. DCM urged the UN, however, to make progress in identifying and preparing more permanent quarters in the old U.S. Embassy Compound or elsewhere. The current MNF-I IZ transition plan, DCM noted, assumes that by the end of 2007 the ISF will bear principal responsibility for security in and around the IZ; still, the plan will be subject to regular revalidation. Post will continue to engage UN/Iraq closely on the transition plan, DCM said, in order to avoid UN opposition to the Coalition's transfer of control of the IZ to the Iraqis. The U/SYG emphasized his conviction that UN/Iraq needs to begin making progress regarding its long-term presence. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Visiting UN U/SYG for Safety and Security David Veness called on the DCM on February 10 to discuss plans for the transition of the International Zone (IZ); short- and longer-term UN security and logistical arrangements; the development of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF); and the current threat situation in Iraq. U/SYG Veness explained that he was tasked to provide to the UNSYG by February 21 "an open-ended assessment of the situation in Iraq in 6, 9, 12, 18, 24 months." DCM strongly urged Veness to receive a briefing on the current IZ transition plan from the Joint Area Support Group Commander, Colonel Kenneth Dahl, who was present at the meeting. (NOTE: This briefing took place later the same day. END NOTE.)

13. (C) DCM underscored that the IZ transition plan's assumptions -- principal among them that the ISF would assume primary control of the IZ and surrounding areas by the end of 2007 -- would be revalidated regularly so that MNF-I does not take irreversible steps to withdraw that would jeopardize security of the IZ and its occupants. It is essential, DCM noted, that the Embassy remain closely engaged with the UN in the assessment of IZ security so that, in mid-2007, a situation does not arise in which MNF-I is prepared to turn over control to the Iraqis while the UN opposes MNF-I's departure.

14. (C) DCM urged the UN to make progress in planning and carrying out its own transition to a long-term presence. Veness and DCM agreed that the GOI had granted the UN permission to establish its permanent presence in the old U.S. Embassy Compound adjacent to the current Palace Complex.

Veness expressed concern about the security status of the al-Rasheed Hotel, which houses many UN staff members, when MNF-I turns over management of the hotel to the Iraqis in May 2006. Veness cited the fact that USG personnel no longer reside in the hotel as an indication that the USG may not consider it safe. COL Dahl assured Veness that the security posture of the hotel would remain fundamentally the same with the transition to Iraqi management, noting that JASG still has two people residing there. COL Dahl also noted that JASG has been working closely with UN/Iraq to find a more suitable interim location for UN staff prior to a move into a permanent facility. Various IZ locations, he added, are under consideration, and it is likely that a move to an interim site will take place in October 2006. Veness said that he is pushing vigorously for the UN to plan and implement UN/Iraq's "progression" to interim and permanent sites and acknowledged the need for greater self-reliance, noting that it would require "a great deal of help" from the UN's friends to get UN/Iraq to that point. DCM suggested that the UK Mission, rather than the U.S. Embassy, might provide a more relevant model for UN consideration.

15. (C) During a brief review of the aviation support issue, which Veness described as a potential "showstopper," the DCM suggested that the UNSYG reach out personally to certain governments such as the Germans and the Italians. The USG, DCM said, is disappointed that other offers have been

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withdrawn due to competing requirements, but he also highlighted that this means prompt UN action is necessary when offers present themselves.
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